UPLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT (ACRE)

CODE 645

MONTANA TECHNICAL GUIDE **SECTION IV**

DEFINITION

Creating, maintaining, or enhancing areas, including wetland, for food and cover for upland wildlife.

PURPOSE

- Provide a variety of food for the desired kinds of wildlife species.
- Provide a variety of cover types for the desired kinds of wildlife—examples include nesting, fawning, loafing, resting, thermal, and escape **cover.**
- Arrange habitat elements in proper amounts and locations to benefit desired species.
- Manage the wildlife habitat to achieve a viable wildlife population within the species home range.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies on all **lands** that are suitable for the kinds of wildlife **food or cover needed.**

CRITERIA

Identify species management goals and objectives. Objectives may be:

1. **To provide for the habitat requirements of particular species.**
2. **To provide for diverse habitats of a certain quality.**

For the desired species, identify the types, amount, and distribution of habitat elements and the management actions necessary to achieve the management objectives.

The landowner shall obtain all necessary local, state and federal permits that apply.

Habitat development and management necessary to achieve the purpose(s) shall be based on a wildlife habitat appraisal or suitable habitat evaluation. The appraisal or evaluation procedure shall be used to determine a habitat suitability for either individual fields, home range areas, habitat type, or natural community as well as to provide an overall evaluation for the entire property or operating unit.

Habitat Appraisal or Habitat Evaluation

Wildlife habitat evaluations may be done using any of the following:

- **USFWS Habitat Evaluation Procedure Models (HEP);**
- **NRCS or other formally developed species specific models;**
- **NRCS state developed wildlife habitat appraisal guide;**

The evaluation will result in a quality rating or habitat suitability index (hsi) **that** considers the type, amount, and distribution of habitat elements required. The quality rating, or hsi, will be compared to the quality criteria **as found in the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), Section III, Resource Quality Criteria.**

If the evaluation indicates a level below the acceptable quality, alternatives will be recommended that will result in the necessary changes in habitat elements or their management to improve the rating to the minimal acceptable level or above.

If the evaluation is at the minimum or above, alternatives will be recommended that will result in the necessary management to preserve, maintain or improve the existing habitat in its present state or toward optimum conditions.

Habitat Requirements

The following habitat **requirements** will be considered when assessing wildlife habitat. Not all may apply to every habitat type **or species**.

1. Food
   a. Type
   b. Amount
2. Cover
   a. Type
   b. Amount
3. Water
   a. Quality
   b. Quantity
   c. Accessibility
   d. Seasonal availability
4. Interspersion and Distance to:
   a. Crops
   b. Grasses and/or legumes
   c. Shrubs
   d. Trees
   e. Water
   f. Openings
5. Migration
   a. Routes
   b. Season of use
   c. Corridors

Development and Management of Wildlife Habitat

- As indicated by the wildlife habitat evaluation, certain habitat elements may be weak or missing. For the desired species, identify the types, amount, and distribution of habitat elements and management actions necessary to achieve the management objectives.
- The amount and kinds of habitat elements planned, their location and management shall be identified in a management plan.
- Vegetative manipulations to restore plant and/or animal diversity shall be accomplished by prescribed burning, or mechanical, biological, or chemical methods, or a combination of the four. These treatments will not be applied during the primary nesting season (April 15–August 1).

See attached 645–Upland Wildlife Habitat Management General Specifications and Planning/ Implementation Guide, for technical support in establishing this practice.

CONSIDERATIONS

Wildlife population control, which is the responsibility of state and federal agencies and the landowner, may be necessary **to effectively implement this practice.**

Consider that manipulations of habitat may impact more than the desired kinds of wildlife. These possible effects shall be evaluated and taken into consideration during the planning process.

Consider effects of management on non-target fish and wildlife species and threatened and endangered species. This practice may be used to promote the conservation of declining species, including threatened and endangered species.

For species requiring large blocks of habitat, consider the problems of habitat fragmentation.

Consider habitat linkages and habitat corridors when developing upland wildlife habitat.

The use of native plant materials **should** be encouraged.

Consider effects of movement of dissolved substances on groundwater and on downstream surface waters.

Consider effects of hazardous materials expected or known to occur on the site on wildlife or human use related to wildlife.

Consider effects of management actions on compliance with state and federal hunting regulations (e.g., baiting).

Consider the impact of elevated wildlife uses on adjacent lands (e.g., crop depredation).

Consider the effect of volume and rates of runoff, infiltration, evaporation, and transpiration on the water budget.

Consider effects on movement of sediment, and soluble and sediment attached substances carried by runoff and/or wind.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Document how habitat needs will be provided for the desired target wildlife species: required depth of water during the growing seasons; types and sizes of structures required; desired plant species and the means of establishing and maintaining them. Specific information may be provided using appropriate job sheets or written documentation in the conservation plan.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The purpose of operation, maintenance and management is to insure that the practice functions as intended over time.

A plan for operation and maintenance of wildlife habitat at a minimum should include monitoring and management of structural and vegetative measures.

Timing of haying and livestock grazing will avoid **peak** periods when wildlife are nesting, fawning, etc., and will allow the establishment, development, and management of vegetation for the intended purpose.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.